

MICROLEPIDOPTERA: A REVIEW OF THE YEAR 1981

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1981 was not a year many lepidopterists in Britain will remember with great relish. The Spring was cold and wet and seemed to go on long after it should have been Summer. Even if the moths were enduring the weather there were few opportunities for students to pursue them in those months when so many larvae can be found.

It seemed in due course that the insects also had not fared very well, for when better weather came, which it did in July and August, the population of many species seemed to be smaller than usual, as was the case with the larger moths.

Books are often set aside in favour of field work during the height of the season, but this year was cheered by the publication in the summer of *The Smaller Moths of Essex* by A. M. Emmet. Not many counties have a good list of 'micro' species and very seldom is such a list produced separately; it is therefore a comment on the prominence of the study of smaller species that a County Field Club should undertake such a work at this time. The list itself is a tribute to the energy and thoroughness of the author, and it is I believe the first attempt at mapping microlepidoptera by 10km grid squares.

Excitement is often aroused by species added to the British list, and these also were few. However, it often happens that discoveries of this kind only come to light a year or more later, and this was the position in 1981. *Dioryctria schuetzeella* Fuchs was taken by several collectors in Kent where it seems to be established as resident and presumed to be feeding on Norway Spruce; it transpired that the first specimen was taken by J. M. Chalmers-Hunt the previous year, but the identity was established, and the species found to be resident in 1981. It will be interesting to see how widespread this species becomes, for so many recent colonists of our Islands are associated with conifers. This is not surprising in view of the addiction of foresters to the growing of these, but despite that one suspects that more species may yet be found if only entomologists were more prepared to endure the monotony of these plantations and work them thoroughly, looking for likely species which are known to occur on the continent of Europe. Towards the end of the year it became clear that *Oegoconia caradjai* Popescu-Gorj & Căpușe was a resident species which had hitherto been confused with *O. quadripuncta* Haw. This makes for a small number of additions, none first taken in 1981, but already there are indications of one of two others which may come to light in 1982 or thereafter.

Species added in recent years continued to be found, as usually happens, for example *Scythris inspersella* Hübn., *Coleophora linoxyridella* Fuchs and *Metzneria aprilella* H.-S. were bred, the latter in great numbers from *Centaurea scabiosa*, but in no case was the known distribution significantly extended.

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As for rare species, it was encouraging to hear of a further record of *Paramesia gnomana* Cl. of which the first authentic specimens were taken by Godfray in 1977. A third specimen of *Lampronia flavimitrella* Hb. was taken in Kent by N. F. Heal, but its life history remains to be unravelled. Many searches for *Agonopterix astrantieae* Hein. in the South of England proved fruitless, but two were bred from North Wales by H. N. Michaelis. His name should have been included in my Review of the Year 1980 among the discoverers of *Bucculatrix cidarella* Zell. feeding on *Myrica gale*, a habit which has now been reported from Ireland.

Sustained interest in the microlepidoptera has produced a number of interesting records, which demonstrates the value of study in this and other less popular fields. It is remarkable that even in big cities like London, species of considerable interest can still be found. The list of species recorded from Buckingham Palace by Dr. J. Bradley continues to grow, and in recent years has included *Morophaga choragella* D. & S., *Coleophora tamesis* Waters, *Aroga velocella* Zell., and *Teleiodes alburnella* Zell.; S. A. Knill-Jones has recorded *Nemapogon granella* Linn. and *Tinea pallescens* Stt. from central London, and at Hampstead R. A. Softly has had *Microthrix similella* Zinck.

There now follows a list of some of the more interesting records, inevitably it is incomplete, and another person would select different species for mention; I have tried to include new, or renewed county records which extend the known range of a species and other less common species which seemed worthy of comment. They are arranged in the order of Kloet & Hincks (1972). *Micropterix tumbergella* Fabr., Perthshire (K. P. Bland); *Stigmella samiatella* Zell., N. E. Essex (A. M. Emmet) more than doubling the number of specimens taken in Britain; *S. acetosae* Stt.; *Adela croesella* Scop., Dumfries (K. P. Bland); *Meesia richardsoni* Wals. still resident at Portland (D. J. Sterling); *Monopis imella* Hb., Co. Cork, Eire (D. J. L. Agassiz); *Ypsolopha lucella* Fabr. including a ♂, Suffolk (A. M. Emmet); *Coleophora violacea* Ström. Perthshire (K. P. Bland); *C. vibicigerella* Zell., Kent (N. F. Heal & R. & A. J. Fairclough); *C. machinella* Bradley, Surrey (R. & A. J. Fairclough); *C. argentula* Steph., E. Lothian and *C. sylvaticella* Wood, Aberdeen (K. P. Bland); *Esperia oliviella* Fabr., Kent (J. Fenn) and Hants. (D. J. Sterling); *Agonopterix bipunctosa* Curtis, Anglesey (H. N. Michaelis) and Cardiganshire (A. N. B. Simpson); *Eulamprotes wilkella* Linn., Essex (A. M. Emmet); *Syncopacma larseniella* Gozm. from many localities after R. J. Heckford¹ showed that most records of *S. cincitella* Cl. refer to this species; *Blastodacna atra* Haw., Hants. (J. R. Langmaid); *Phalonia minimana* Carad. and *Aphelia unitana* Hb., Selkirk (K. P. Bland); *Olethreutes arcuella* Cl., Kent (J. Fenn) and lastly a specimen of the rare migrant *Euchromius ocella* Haw. was taken in Kent in November by B. F. Skinner.

¹We expect publication of a paper by R. J. Heckford on *Syncopacma larseniella* in the next issue of the *Record* — Editor.